

LETTER

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FROM A

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

TO HIS

FRIEND in the Country,

CONTAINING,

His REASONS for being against the LATE
Act for preventing the Retail of

SPIRITUOUS LIQUORS;

In which the great INCREASE of the

CIVIL LIST

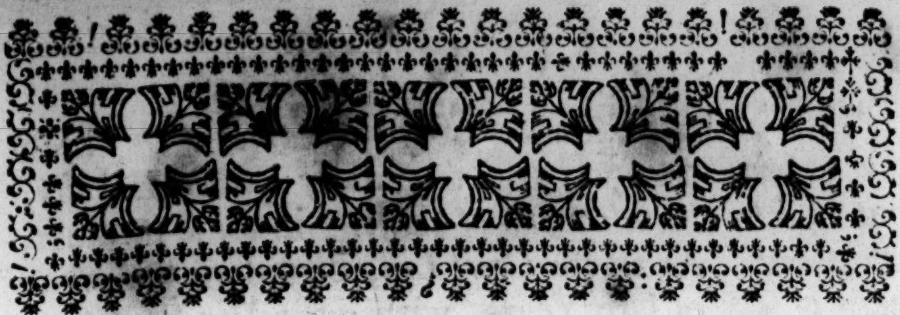
By this ACT will be particularly consider'd.

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A
L E T T E R

FROM A

Member of Parliament

TO HIS

Friend in the Country, &c.

SIR,

AFTER what hath been written of late Years, concerning the publick Revenues, particularly the Civil List, I was in Hopes there would have been no Occasion for saying any Thing farther upon those Subjects. But You desire to be inform'd not only what Share the Civil List hath had in the late *Act against Spirituous Liquors*, but likewise of the Reasons why I, who was for the last *Act for remedying this Evil*, and afterwards for amending and making it effectual, instead of repealing it, should at last be against this *Act*, as it is now so wisely fram'd and pass'd.

This is the Substance of your Enquiry ; which not only calls upon Me to satisfy your Curiosity, but makes a *vindication of Myself*, in some measure, necessary. As to the *Civil List*, considering all that hath pass'd of late Years, with what We have seen in the *present Case*, it appears that We are like to go on in the same fatal Methods ; and so unpleasing a Prospect should have been my Excuse to You for not entering into *this Subject* ; but as it is mix'd with a *personal Concern*, my Silence might have look'd like the Colouring of Guilt only. I shall therefore comply with your Request, desiring never to be engag'd again upon *these Subjects* ; for We now see enough to know that He will be the easiest *Englishman*, who can for the future learn quietly to submit to what He finds He must bear ; an hard Lesson for a *People*, bred and nurs'd up in the Thoughts of their being the *only Nation*, which hath hitherto maintain'd its *Liberties*. But if upon all Occasions, publick as well as private, *avow'd and open Purchases* of the Favour of the Crown are to be the Way of obtaining what neither *Justice* nor *Merit* can otherwise gain, such melancholy Reflections will naturally arise.

It will be unnecessary to make any other Remarks on the great Increase in the Manufacture of *strong Waters* and *Spirits* in *England*, before his Majesty's Reign, than to observe that it had met with all possible Encouragement from the *Legislature* for above *forty Years*, and was look'd upon not only as a great Increase of Wealth to this Nation, by the *Revenues* it produc'd, but likewise in Point of *Trade* ; since it prevented the sending out such vast Sums of Money for *French Brandies*, which was so much complain'd of in the Reign of King *Charles the II*. But as *these sort of Revenues* have always some Evils attending them, so the Greatness

Greatness of *this Revenue* arose from the excessive Use of *Spirituous Liquors* amongst the common People ; which made it, even at the Time of the granting it to his *present Majesty*, to be almost equal in Produce, as well as Abuse, to what it was the next Year, when a Law pass'd for laying a Duty upon *compound Spirits*, commonly call'd *Gin*, &c. This was the Title of the *Act*; and a Duty of 5*s. per Gallon*, and 20*l.* for a *Licence* was laid upon the Sellers of it. As the *Excise Officers* were examin'd in Parliament, in Relation to this Affair, and the known Name of *that destructive Liquor* was then made Use of, it was thought This would have been effectual ; and the Design of *that Law* was plainly to have gone farther than it did ; for the *Preamble* begins thus. “ Whereas the drinking of “ *Spirits and strong Waters* is become very common “ amongst the People of inferior Rank ; and the “ constant and excessive Use thereof tends greatly “ to the Destruction of their Healths, &c. And “ whereas it is found by Experience that the “ Temptation to such licentious Use of *these pernicious Liquors* is from the Cheapness thereof.” The Defeat therefore of *this Law* did not arise from the general Intention of the *Legislature*, but from the *enacting Part*, by the Description of a *Liquor*, which They thought would have taken in the *whole*. This was evaded by *another Spirituous Liquor*, sarcastically call'd *Parliament Brandy*. The Effect of this Archness was, that the Country was grossly impos'd upon, and made to believe that it affected the Price of their *Corn* ; and the greatest Number of the Zealots for the *present Act* were Those, who were for repealing *that Law*, assigning its not being *effectual* for their Motives. Instead of This, I, with some others, thought that the *Act* had shew'd itself *effectual*, as far as it went, which the

the very *Evasion* prov'd, and that there was nothing wanting to make it fully so, but to *extend* it.

To shew how much *Gentlemen and People in the Country* were impos'd upon by that *Notion*, several Accounts were call'd for from the *Excise Office*, which made the contrary appear to be true; for the *Excise on Beer and Ale*, for the Year ending at *Midsummer 1725*, the first Year's Account then call'd for, produc'd 1,094,953*l.* which declin'd every Year to *Midsummer 1729*; That is, half a Year before the *Gin Act* took Place, and was then but 963,763*l.* which is 131,190*l.* less. From that Time, by the Effects of the *Act*, it gradually rose; so that at *Midsummer 1732*, it produc'd 1,071,240*l.* which is 107,477*l.* more than it was in the Year that the *Act* pass'd.

The same Observations arise, concerning the *Home Spirits*, by the Accounts deliver'd this Year of the net Produce for the Year ending at *Midsummer 1725*, which was but 88,622*l.* and the same Produce for *Midsummer 1729*, was 104,373*l.* which was an Increase upon the whole but of 15,751*l.* and the Loss was 131,190*l.* upon *Beer and Ale*.

After the first Fall by this *Act*, the Evasion of it did not raise the Duty to its former Height; for the Year ending at *Midsummer 1732*, was but 100,025*l.* net Produce, which was 4348*l.* less than in the Year 1729, whilst the *Excise on Beer and Ale* that Year was 107,477*l.* more than in 1729; and surely every one must have been convinc'd, who was willing to be so, or consider'd any Thing about it, that more *Corn* was consum'd to produce 107,477*l.* on the *Excise on Beer and Ale*, than there could have been, in any Degree of Proportion, to produce only 4348*l.* on the Duties of *Home-made Spirits*.

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Since We are upon *this Article*, which requires *Computation*, and *Figures* to prove *Facts*, let us go through with it, that it may not break in upon our Subject too much afterwards.

The *Excise on Beer and Ale* immediately declined, upon the Repeal of *this Act*, notwithstanding a general *Election* intervened, which one should have imagined would have kept it up, and produced for the Year, ending at *Midsummer 1735*, but 1,021,370*l.* which is 49,870*l.* less than the Year the *Gin-Act* was repeal'd in. This plainly shews what a great Increase will arise to the *one*, as a stop is put to the *other*. The Loss of the *Civil-Lift* upon *Beer and Ale* is near one half of the whole Produce of 131,190*l.* from the Year 1725 to That of 1729; whilst its share of Gain on the *Home-made Spirits* for that Year was but 5527*l.* Its share of Loss from the *Gin-Act*, for the Year 1732, was but 2267*l.* on *Home-made Spirits*, whilst its Gain was near one half 107,477*l.* increased by the *Excise on Beer and Ale* by it.

It is difficult to say distinctly what Alteration the *Act* had on *foreign Brandies* and *Spirits*; because the whole Duties on them, for the Year 1721, produce but 24,597*l.* and yet in the Year 1723, (after that miraculous and never-to-be-forgotten high Tide, which so wonderfully open'd the Harbour of *Dunkirk*, that *French Brandies* were permitted to be imported from thence as *Flemish*) they produce 70,291*l.*; and so great and necessary was our Esteem for the *French*, as well as to give all possible Encouragement to *our own Distillery*, (which, it was pretended, wanted *their Brandies* to mix and rectify *our Spirits*) that a Law pass'd to lower the Duties on *them*, and to make *all other foreign ones* pay an equal Duty with *them*.

them. This occasion'd so extraordinary an Importation of Flemish Brandy, before that *Act* was to take Place, that the net Produce of the Year 1733 was 312,460*l.* What an immense Increase is this from the Year 1721? Yet great and accidental as it was, filling us with Stock for Years to come, it is valued into the *Medium* too, that is given the *Civil List*. What strange Fatality attends this Nation, that even *Dunkirk*, open'd and suffer'd to continue so, with Views not the most favourably received by this Nation, should be the Occasion of our giving a standing Increase to the *Civil List*?

From hence two *Things* are certain and plain. The *first* is, that as less *Spirituous Liquors* were drunk, the more *Beer and Ale* was, and consequently the more *Corn* was consum'd. The *second* is, that the *Crown* lost in its *Civil List* about 65,000*l.* a Year on *Beer and Ale* for getting 4348*l.* on *Home-Spirits*, besides 9739*l.* on *foreign Spirits*; and therefore the *Ministers*, who knew this Fact, and the probable Effects, which the *Given Act* would have, in this Respect, had more Modesty than to think of making the People *purchase* the Increase, that would accrue to the *Civil List* by it; for which Reason there was no Clause in that *Act* of the same Nature with That in the present one.

The next *Thing* to be consider'd is the *Remedy*, that was first proposed, and the several Steps, which have been taken to bring this *Act* to its happy Maturity.

The Enormity of drinking *Spirituous Liquors* was now grown to such an Height, that the Grand Juries of *London*, *Middlesex* and the *Tower Hamlets* made *Presentments* of it; and a *Report* was likewise made of it by * his *Majesty's Justices of the Peace*

* *Distill'd Spirituous Liquors the Bane of the Nation &c. p. 16.*
App.

Peace at Hick's-Hall. The Turn of them all seems to express only a Want of sufficient Power in the Magistrates for preventing this Evil. That of the Justices says, there were 4939 licensed, and 2105 unlicensed Houses, where these Liquors are sold. — “ † Should it be objected, say They, “ why are these suffer'd by the Magistrates to go “ unpunish'd? — Let it be answer'd, that whilst “ They have a Fund, as is generally imagined, “ to support Themselves, and the Expence of de-“ fending every Conviction lies on the Magi-“ strate &c. — Now, there are two Clauses in the present Act, the one settling a Form for a Convicti-*on*, and the other, making the Exciseman's En-tries in his Book to be admitted as Evidence against a Vender. This is strengthening the Hands of the Justices; and had these two Clauses been added to the former Act, revived and extended to the Retail of all sorts of Spirituous Liquors what-soever, it is highly probable that it would have been effectual to those Evils, which only are the Grounds of Complaint; but instead of That, the same knowing Spirit, which would be contented with nothing but repealing the former Law, would now be contented with nothing but a total Prohi-bition of the use of all Spirituous Liquors, in any Shape.

It was natural to have believed that the Expe-rience, which We have already had, in this Cafè, of the Effects of a warm Imagination, heated with Zeal for the Sale of the Produce of our Lands, would at least have made us consider the Affair with more Coolness and Candour, were it only for Fear of falling into the same Errors. In-stead of That, such was the Warmth, such the Cry, that no Remedy could be patiently consider'd but That, which is the most violent,

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† *Id. p. 22.*

and first proposed. Flush'd with Success, and not being opposed in this first righteous Essay, They thought it impossible that there should be any Fallibility in any Part of so well-intended a Scheme; but no sooner had the Committee of the House come to those Resolutions, upon which the Bill was founded, but a certain honourable Gentleman desired They might sit again, before They made any Report. He justly express'd his Opinion, that the best Way to remedy *this Grievance* would be by reviving and pursuing the Design of the *Act*, that was so lately repeal'd; but since He perceived the Bent of the House, it would be necessary to consider of some *new Taxes*, to replace the Loss, which the publick Funds would sustain, at the same Time; and that they ought to go Hand in Hand; for if one should be now obtain'd without the other, it might be difficult to persuade Gentlemen hereafter to come into the giving of *new Taxes* to replace it; and such was the Joy, upon the Prospect of being able to purchase *this Act*, that nothing was thought of but *new Taxes*; and Those on *Luxury*, as several Things on that Head had been thrown out in the former Part of the Session, were uppermost in every Man's Thoughts. The other Part of the honourable Gentleman's Speech, for reviving the old *Act*, pass'd unheeded and had no Weight. An Incident of so extraordinary a Nature had, no Doubt, its Effect upon Him; for when We next went into the Committee, instead of any *new Taxes*, as was expected, on *Luxury*, (which would have made the Rich pay for what was thus thought to be lost by reforming the Poor) We were surprized with a long, laborious Account, full of infinite Knowledge, to shew what Part of the publick Debts had a Share in the Produce of *these Duties*; and three Funds were named,

nam'd, which together amounted to 96,711 £ per Annum. The Civil List, you may be sure, was not forgot. Its Share of this Duty was call'd 67,000 £ per Annum. It was likewise own'd, that there would probably be an Increase upon the Brewery, by putting a stop to this extravagant use of *Spirituos Liquors*; but as what That might be was uncertain, the Civil List Share ought to be now provided for; and if any Increase did arise upon the Beer and Ale, We might call for it two or three Year hence, *that the publick might have it in Return*. It must be remember'd here that the last Words were repeated as Assurances, upon the Report, by two other honourable Gentlemen, greatly concern'd in the Administration of Affairs. The End of This was, that the Committee came to a Resolution, *that all the Duties, which should arise from Brandy, Spirits, and the Licences, should be carry'd to the aggregate Fund, and that it should make good any Deficiencies to the publick ones, which were concern'd in these Duties, and likewise pay an annual Sum to the Civil List for its Share.*— This put a stop to the Unanimity, which had long reign'd upon this Subject, open'd the Eyes of many, and made the Bill to be consider'd entirely in a different Light. This Proposition was debated again, upon the Report; and the honourable Gentleman assured the House that the Medium should not be fix'd at the highest, but that the Bill should be brought in with a Blank for that Part, so as to admit of a more free and serious Consideration; yet notwithstanding This was the Sense and Debate of the House, the Bill was brought in with a fix'd Medium, which was from the Time of his Majesty's Accession to the Throne to Midsummer last; so that all the Freedom and serious Consideration, that was design'd to be left

the *House*, was to cast up the Produce of those eight Years, when the *Evil* was at its greatest Height, then divide it by 8, and fill up the *Blank* with that Sum, as a farther Increase to the Civil List. This was not the only extraordinary Thing of that Day ; for the *Bill* was usher'd in by a very unparliamentary Message from the *Crown* ; in which his Majesty acquainted Us, that He gave Us his Consent to do as We pleased in *this Affair*. The Wisdom of Parliament, to prevent their too easily granting publick Favours, or publick Money, to private Persons, have made it a standing Order, that no Bills of those Kinds shall be brought in, before his Majesty hath been apply'd to, and his Consent signify'd to the House. If *this Act* therefore is to be consider'd as a *private Boon*, or *Favour*, such a *Message* was necessary ; but if otherwise, it is still more extraordinary ; nor is there any *Precedent* of this Nature. It is true, the *Bill* wanted something of the *usual Form*, by which *Money* is granted ; That is, it should at least be *ask'd for*, that the *Commons* might be thank'd for it ; instead of which, there had been no Demand from the *Crown* ; but the *Message* and the *Bill* came together ; by which it was well understood to what the *Crown* gave its Consent. But what farther Designs were in it, is not so certain. It had the Appearance, at first, as if it was establishing a *new Precedent*, by which the *Commons* would be hinder'd from rectifying any *Grievances*, which affected the Profit of the *Crown* ever so little, unless They came to Resolutions, at the same Time, to give a *very valuable Consideration for it*, before the *Bill* should be suffer'd to be brought in. This would certainly tend very much to the Destruction of the Liberties and Privileges of *Parliament* ; but We have since

since the Pleasure of seeing that This is not yet to be a standing Rule, but sometimes, and as Occasion requires, as the same Person argu'd, when We first began to take the *Sinking Fund* for the *current Service of the Year*; which is now become so habitual, that it is every Year's Supply.

Were it not that these sort of Precedents were of a growing Nature, (especially as all modern ones are allow'd to be the best, and only fit ones to be follow'd, as was asserted in some late Debates) there would be the greater Comfort in observing that the *Act for pardoning People, concern'd in Running Goods, and for preventing it for the future*, had no *Message*, nor *Consideration given to the Civil List for it*, though it is an *Act*, which required both as much as the other; for amongst the Revenues granted his Majesty for his *Civil List*, the *Seizures of run Goods* make a distinct Branch, and for *Tea* alone produced, for the Year 1727, but 12,957 Pounds Weight, and for the Year 1735, 71,869¹, which shews This to have been an *increasing Revenue*, at the Time of granting it, as well as the Duties on *Spirits and Brandies*. His Majesty therefore hath as much a Right to such Increase, or a *Consideration for it*, as He had in the other Case. Nor can the Argument here be of greater Weight than in the other; that what He loses by *Seizures* will be amply supply'd by his Share in the *Increase on Customs*. But as the greatest Part of these *Seizures* arises from *Tea*, and as this Bill was introduced by a Complaint from the *Dealers in that Commodity*; it ought to be observed, that the *Civil List Share* is a very Trifle, in Comparison of the *whole Duty*; for it hath but a Part of the Produce of the *Customs*, the 4*s.* per *Pound* belonging intirely to the *Publick*; nor is it possible, though an entire

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Stop should be put to the Running, that its Share of that Duty should produce what it does by Seizures now. Is it not therefore surprizing to see that, when a certain Decrease is apparent, no Care is taken to supply it, nor any Demand made of that Nature; and, on the contrary, where a certain Increase is to arise to the Civil List, it is to be purchas'd too? What can be the Reasons for this different Manner of acting? Was it out of Modesty? Or were some Persons fatiated with the bountiful Increase already given? Or was it to teach Us that when private Men pretend to redress Grievances, the Nation must pay for it; and that the Popularity of doing it without was reserv'd to Them alone? — A bad and ill-natur'd Minister might hereafter be pleased with dipping Those, who had complain'd of former extraordinary Grants to the Crown, and take the Opportunity of a misguided Zeal, not only to expose Them, but to make his particular Court to the Crown, and if possible to the People too.— But to return to our present, and more immediate Consideration.

Upon the Assurances, which had been given, that if the Brewery produc'd more by this Alteration, the Publick should have it; some Gentlemen, who were equally unwilling that the Crown should either get, or lose any Thing by the Redress of this Grievance, thought the justest and fairest Method would be to take the Medium of the whole hereditary and temporary Excise, (the Duties on Brandies and Spirits being but one Branch of it) during his Majesty's Reign, and fix That for the Sum to be annually paid out of the aggregate Fund. With this View, some Accounts were mov'd to be call'd for; which was refused, though those very Accounts were afterwards found to be in the House, and refer'd to the Committee upon the Bill. In these Circumstances,

Circumstances, nothing could be more reasonable than such a Proposition ; for if the Duties on Spirits and Brandies were to be taken away from that Fund, and the Increase of the Brewery accountable for, the other small Branches remaining were so very trifling, that they deserved no Consideration ; and it was just to the Publick, that the same Act, which fix'd the Medium for the Spirits, should secure their Right to the Profits of the Brewery, in Return. This forced a Discovery of what, perhaps, was before design'd to be conceal'd ; for it was said, in Answer to it, that these Revenues were given to his Majesty without Account, and that This would be making them accountable ; that it was not to be expected, at this Time, that We should be lessening the Civil List Revenues, when, considering what would soon happen, We might rather expect a Demand for an Increase ; but That, He could assure Us, would not be.

How it was possible this Proposition could be for lessening the Revenue, is not easily conceived, unless We call to Mind the famous 115,000*l.* given for Arrears ; from whence We may form some Notions of the Profits, that may arise from a Revenue's being unaccountable, though some Gentlemen were not wanting in their Zeal and Care for that favourite Revenue ; notwithstanding which They are every Year telling us, that it is far short in its Produce of 800,000*l.* per Annum, though They have never since made any Demand for the Deficiencies ; not that We are to suppose that it is supply'd by the Revenue's being unaccountable.

As to what is hinted at, relating to the happy Nuptials of his Royal Highness, it is a sort of tacit Acknowledgment that there was a Design of increasing the Civil List by this *Act* ; but that it should

should be with this View, and in this Manner, was to Me of all Things the most shocking; for if We consider the Humanity, Courtesy and Generosity of *his Royal Highness*, nothing could be more grating to his Temper and Honour, than that his Subsistence should be taken out of the Purchase-Money of an *Act, for preventing the total Destruction of the common People*; especially, when We consider that the Reason for giving so large a *Civil List* was for making an honourable *Provision for all the Royal Family*; and that 100,000*l.* a Year was design'd for *his Royal Highness* out of it, as *his present Majesty* had, when He was *Prince of Wales*. This will plainly appear, if We reflect on what pass'd at the Time of granting the 800,000*l.* a Year. His Majesty, in his first Speech, says, " being persuaded that the Experience of *past Times*, and a due Regard to the *Honour and Dignity of the Crown*, will prevail upon You to give this first Proof of your Zeal and Affection"—His late Majesty had but 700,000*l.* a Year for the *Civil List*; out of which 100,000*l.* was paid to the *Prince of Wales*. He had besides, during his Reign, 300,000*l.* from the *two Insurance Companies*, and 1,000,000*l.* from the *Civil List Lottery*; which amounts to just 100,000*l.* a Year more, during his whole Reign, and is that *past Experience*, for which We had so great a Regard as to give his *present Majesty* 100,000*l.* a Year more. This demonstrates, that 100,000*l.* was to be continued to be paid the *Prince of Wales*; and if He hath not had it hitherto, nobody ought to doubt that He will soon have the *whole*, pursuant to the design'd Grant of the *People*, since for that Consideration so large a Revenue was given; nor are We to despair of seeing proper Care taken of *her Royal Highness, the Princess*, and that a

Bill will be brought in, at least, the next Session, though it was not in This, for establishing a *Revenue* upon Her, if she should happen to survive *his Royal Highness*; for This is what was early provided, with Respect to *her present Majesty*; and I do not remember that it was put off for a Year, with the Compliment of a *Naturalization-Bill*, or that *any such* was ever made Her; though now it ought certainly to be esteem'd equal in Honour to the making of a *good Settlement or Fointure*.

When We came into the *Committee*, upon *this Bill*, some *Alterations* were made, and the *Blanks* fill'd up in a Manner not intirely approv'd of. When We came to That for fixing the *Medium*, for which the *Civil List* was to be paid, *Those in the Ministry* moved that it should be 70,000*l.* a Year. *Other Gentlemen*, who declar'd Themselves to be against the *whole Clause*, as unnecessary, and should chiefly debate upon *that Head*, yet as it was necessary, in Point of Form, to fill up *that Blank*, They proposed the Sum of 43,000*l.* not only because it was a *less Sum*, and consequently the *People* would not be such Losers by the *Act*; but as it was plain that the *Civil List* would get by it, as hath been already shewn, though nothing was given for the *Purchase* of it; yet if a Value was to be fix'd on its Produce, it ought to be That of the *seven Years before his Majesty's Accession*, as being the fairest Manner of computing what *that Parliament* design'd to give it for, and not from the very *extraordinary Increase*, which requir'd the *present Remedy*. Nay, the *Evil* was great at the very Time of granting it to Him; for the *Home-Spirits* produced about as much as they did in the second Year of his Reign, when the *Abuse* only was design'd to be as effectually remedy'd as it

ought to be now; and even there nothing was allow'd in Consideration to the *Civil List*; so sensible was the *Minister*, at that Time, that it would be a Benefit to *those Revenues*, as appears plainly by the State of them, at the Beginning of this Letter; nor can it be imputed to Him as any Neglect, or Want of a proper Concern for *those Revenues*, when We consider that This pass'd at the same Time that the memorable 115,000*l.* was obtain'd for *Arrears*; an Article, that never was excell'd by any Thing but *This*. That might be charged and owing to the Dexterity of *some Persons*; whilst *This* is paying for preserving the People to consume *other Commodities*, which produce a greater Increase to *those Revenues*.

The Debate upon *this Point* held too long to admit of any farther against the *whole Clause* the same Night; but That was done upon the *Report*, and *another Proposition* was made, by which it was impossible that his Majesty could be a Loser; and, though a Gainer, not in so great a Degree as by the *present one*. This was by settling it in such a Manner, that if, in any one Year, the *whole hereditary and temporary Excise* had fallen short of what they produced upon the *Medium of his Majesty's Reign hitherto*, We might by the *Act* have been obliged to compleat it to *that Sum*, as We are in the Case of the whole 800,000*l.* a Year; by which Means no *Loss* could possibly accrue to *Him*, and He would have had his Share of the *Increase*, which was all He was then intitled to. This was likewise refused.

Another Clause was offer'd for excepting *Punch*, under proper Regulations, which was also rejected.

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It was afterwards mov'd to make *this Law temporary*; which was withdrawn upon the Argument of a Gentleman in a considerable Employment, who observed how unnecessary it was, since the *Act* must certainly be repeal'd in a Year or two.

Having thus not only given You an Account of the Proceedings, but many Observations upon *this Act*, I shall be the shorter in offering my Reasons why I was at last intirely against it.

In the first Place, I think it too violent a Remedy for an *Evil*, which might probably have been cured without *a certain Destruction of so many thousand Families* as This must Occasion, besides the *Sugar Colonies*. The *last Act* was effectual, as far as it went; and the Scheme of That is founded upon these Words of the Preamble, which say; “that the Temptation to such “ licentious Use of *these pernicious Liquors* is from “ the Cheapness thereof”—As This is still undeniably true, the best Method would have been to have follow'd *that Act*, and laid such a Duty only as would have put it above the Reach of the *lowest of the People*, and to have try'd this Method, by *extending the former Act to all sorts of Spirituous Liquors sold by Retail*. If This should have been found, upon Experience, not to be sufficient, it might, at another Time, have been carry'd still farther; and by these Means, the Ruin of so many Thousands would not have been so certain; at least, without first trying whether it was necessary, or not, for the Preservation of the whole. Can any Thing be more melancholy than to hear and read of the Despair, to which Numbers are already reduced, for the Gratification of *some Persons* in taking the most violent *Remedy* first? In *Politicks*, as well as in

Sick People, the harshest Remedies ought always to be the last. Nobody would for a *cut Finger* immediately order an *Arm* to be cut off. Yet, in this Case, the *Plantations*, our own *Distillery*, and every Thing of that Nature was not suffer'd to meet with any Consideration whatever. May not a proper Degree of the Consumption of *Rum*, *Sugar*, and our own *Spirits* be not only right, but beneficial to the Nation? *This Act* will not alter the Nature of Men, nor make Them more sober; but as it puts *one Sort of Liquor*, by its Dearness, out of their Reach, it drives Them to another within their Compas. *Beer* and *Ale* will be the Consumption of Those, who could go no higher than *Drams*; but the *middling sort of People*, who made use of *these Spirituous Liquors in Punch*, will probably fall to drinking of *Wine*, in some Degrees, more than They do at present? Will That suit either their *Pockets*, or their *Health* better? That *compound Wine*, which is the general Draught of the Kingdom, is certainly in its Nature as pernicious a Liquor as *Punch*, if not more so. It is not to be expected that the Bent of the People of this Nation to live above their Circumstances will be reform'd by *this Act*; and it is to be fear'd that *Farmers* and *Tradesmen*, who are to fall into a more expensive Fashion, will be the less able to pay their Rent, or subsist even as They do at present.

Our *Sugar Colonies*, whose deplorable State hath so often brought them, of late Years, under the Consideration of Parliament, will in all Probability be totally ruin'd by it. They could scarce support Themselves before, with the Assistance, which the *Legislature* had already given Them; and such was their Condition at this Time,

Time, that They had Reason to expect the first Thing the Parliament would have done, this Session, would have been to enter into Considerations for their Support and Encouragement ; for it was put off last Year, that *Papers* and *Accounts*, which were thought wanting, might be laid before the House this Session. Instead of This, to what are They now reduced ? The Consumption of *Rum*, which is so considerable an Article to Them, as alone enables Them to subsist under the low Price, for which They have of late Years sold their *Sugar*, is not only prevented by all possible Endeavours here, but even *Sugar* itself must be much less used than ever.

The Importance of *those Places* hath been very much consider'd of late Years ; and the Loss to this Nation in the *Ballance of Trade*, by the *French* falling into the *Sugar Trade*, and selling it to other Countries cheaper than We can afford, hath already been sufficiently felt. But *this Act* will go farther, and render Them utterly unable to purchase, or obtain that vast Quantity of *Goods* and *Manufactures*, with which their *Mother Country* hath hitherto so profitably supply'd them. They will become of themselves desolate and forsaken ; nor need We then be under any Apprehensions of the *Spaniards*, or the *French* taking them, as We have been of late Years ; for were they even to lye uncultivated, the Advantage to the *French*, in the Price of their *Sugars*, might be almost equal to their possessing them. Can this Nation possibly subsist long under that Loss, and must not such a Stop of the Circulation of Trade be soon terribly felt by the *Manufacturers of this Kingdom* ?

I have always look'd upon *Scotland* as the wise, provident and ever-getting Part of the Nation ; who so happily understand their *own Interest*, as well as *Power*, that They commonly exempt Themselves from some Share of the *Taxes* We pay, and manage what They do pay so well, as not to let it be brought into this Kingdom, notwithstanding the many *Laws*, that are enacted for paying it here. They have consider'd *this Act* in the same sagacious Light, and have got a Clause added to it, which intirely exempts Them from the *new Duties* and *Licensing*. The Reasons assign'd for it were, that without it they should not know what to do with their *bad Corn*. If That was true, the same sort of Arguments must have their Weight here ; and surely the Preservation of the Healths of the People of *Scotland* ought to be as much our Care as of Those in *England*. Or were They only wiser than *Us*, in not suffering such a dangerous Experiment to be try'd in that Part of the Kingdom ?

There is another Part of the *Act*, from which it might have been thought, perhaps, that *this Clause* would have exempted Them ; I mean where it is enacted that all the *Duties* and *Monies*, which are raised on *Spirituos Liquors &c.* shall be paid into the *aggregate Fund*. Now, if This is strictly perform'd, some Money must be brought from *Scotland* ; which at present, perhaps, may be thought much better *divided*. This, I say, must be the Case, if the Law is put in Execution ; for the Parts, from which They have taken so much Care to exempt Themselves, are only the *Licence-Money* and the *20 s. per Gallon on Aqua Vitæ* only. This is so essential an Article with
some

some People that it will soon give occasion for amending and explaining the *Act*.

It was very observable how the Disposition of several Persons, who had Designs of making This a good *Act*, were alter'd by the Debates against giving any Thing to the *Civil List* for it. As it was shewn that We gave nothing for the last *Act*, so if This should do no more than was design'd by the last, there could be no Pretence for purchasing it; so that the more violent the Thing was, the better Colour it was thought for what was ask'd, and that it would likewise make it the more necessary to explain and amend it hereafter; for notwithstanding so much was said about *repealing* it soon, there is no Dependance to be placed on it, when We consider that if it should be *repeal'd*, the *Civil List* will lose the vast Increase it gets by it; and Experience shews Us, in the Case of the ever-memorable *Pot-Act*, what We are to expect in this Case too. That was a Duty laid upon the *Virtuallers* within the Bills of Mortality, upon a Petition from them, desiring a Law to hinder Them from sending out their *Pots*. This was ridiculous in itself; but the Motive, that induced Them to come into it, was from an Understanding They had that if They paid this *Tax*, They should be exempted from the Burthen of Quartering *Soldiers*. The Petition obtain'd. There was no Danger that They, or their *Fellow-Traders*, should be heard against the *Bill*, if They found Themselves imposed upon; since the modern Practice is so strong and very useful, in not hearing *Petitioners* against a *Money-Bill*; and therefore it is less surprizing that Those, who were concern'd in the *Sugar-Colonies*, were not heard this Year. This *Law*, for

for which the *Victuallers* paid so dearly, was found to be very detrimental to their Trade, and therefore They have since had so much Justice done Them as to have *that Part of the Act*, which prevented Them from sending out their *Pots*, repeal'd, that They might be the better enabled to pay the *Tax*, which was still continued upon Them. This alone was sufficient to incline Me to be against a *Bill*, which had so strong an Appearance of the Want of *future Amendments* and *Explanations*; especially if it should be thought to have been form'd in this Manner, for no other Reason than to add farther Burthens upon the *People*, by obtaining an Increase to the *Civil List*. Let us consider that if the *Act* should want future Alterations in the *moderating Part*, how cruel it is to ruin so many Thousands, and destroy the Trade of this Nation, only to obtain something beyond the Remedy of the *Evil*, which occasion'd the Complaint.

The Article of the *Civil List* alone, had it been a much *better* or a *more perfect Bill*, was a sufficient Argument with Me against passing it into a *Law*. Whoever thinks that 800,000 *l.* a Year is either too much, or even sufficient, cannot be justifly'd to Themselves, or to their Country, for unnecessarily giving more. The *Grievance* is of such a Nature, that not only the *Preamble*, but the *Effects of the Act* will sufficiently evidence to the World that *such a Remedy* ought not to be *purchased of the Crown*, even supposing that the Redress of any *Grievance*, under our present happy Establishment of *Liberty and Property*, can require such Additions to the *Civil List*; which, large as it is at present, may by these means become

become itself the greatest Grievance, and too heavy for the People long to bear.

The Medium being taken from his Majesty's happy Accession to Midsummer last is taking it at the highest Value, founded on the Destruction of the People and that notorious Abuse, which raised it to such a Height, that an *Act* of this very extraordinary Nature is thought the only Method of fully putting a stop to it. As the *Remedy* speaks the *Evil*, so the *Evil* ought not to be computed as a *standing annual Revenue arising to the Crown*; for the Destruction of the *People* would be the Destruction of the *Consumers*; and consequently not only the Share of *this Duty*, paid the *Civil List*, but many other Branches of *that Revenue*, as well as of Those belonging to the *Publick*, must have fallen much shorter, had it been suffer'd to continue. The taking it at the *highest Medium* is the less to be justify'd, since there were so many *other Methods* to have done it; (as hath been already mention'd) by which the *Crown*, could have receiv'd no possible Prejudice, nor the *People* become such sufferers as They are like to be by This; which for the future gives both the *Increase*, that arose from the *Evil*, and That, which will certainly arise from *remedying* it, to the *Crown*. Thus is the Nation oblig'd to pay for it as a *Grievance subsisting*, as well as *cured*; which will undoubtedly meet with most grateful Acknowledgments from the *People* to the Merit and Ingenuity of Those, to whom They are so much obliged for this great Care of their Interest and Welfare.

There was no Occasion for settling any Sum to be paid the *Civil List*, for its Share of the Duties on *Spirits*, if *this Act* was not design'd

to increase it ; since it was impossible that any Loss should happen to *his Majesty's Revenue*, how much soever the *publick ones* might suffer by it, there being so provident an *Act of Parliament* for obliging the Nation to compleat his Revenue to full 800,000*l.* a Year *net Produce*. Nor, from the Nature of the *Alterations*, was there any Probability of a *Decrease upon the whole*, but on the contrary, if the *People* are not already too much exhausted, a *certain Increase of those Revenues* by it ; for his Majesty's Share of *foreign Spirits* is about $\frac{2}{9}$; of *Home-Spirits* about $\frac{1}{3}$; his Share of the *Beer and Ale* is, on the whole Produce, near $\frac{1}{2}$; and the Check, that was given to this Enormity by the *former Act*, proves This to be true ; for as That occasion'd a greater Produce in those Duties on *Beer and Ale*, as appear by the *Accounts*, and what hath been already prov'd on that Head ; so they have declin'd too, as Those on *Spirits* have increased, which hath thereby occasion'd a greater Loss to the *Civil List* ; and if *this Act* was to be consider'd only in the Light of a *Bargain and Sale* between the *Crown* and the *People*, the *Consideration-Money* ought to be given to the *latter*, since the *former* will certainly be so great a Gainer by it. What the Gains will be, it is impossible to compute ; but We may judge, from the Proportions they have hitherto borne to one another, that they are like to be very great ; and, perhaps, the best Way of shewing This will be by supposing the *Act* to have as much Effect as any one of the greatest Favourers of it can expect. Let us therefore suppose that the Revenue of 300,000*l.* on *Spirits* should, by *this Act*, which is

is design'd almost as a *total Prohibition*, be reduced to 100,000 *l.* which is reckoning $\frac{2}{3}$ less drunk than at present; can any one conceive, after what hath been already observed, that the Increase on *Beer and Ale*, can be so little in Return as 200,000 *l.* a Year, which is no more than what is lost by the other? But reckon it only at That, the *Civil List* will gain about 100,000 *l.* and the Nation, after paying the 70,000 *l.* a Year out of it, will have but 30,000 *l.* a Year to answer their Loss. This will serve to give some Idea of the great Increase upon this Head; but That is not the only one, upon which it will gain by this *Act*; for as the People, who are enervated by these Liquors, would then earn more, their Consumption in other Things would be greater; and We are in such happy Circumstances, that in whatever their Ex-pences may consist, They must pay more Taxes for them. But to mention one Article, in which there must be a considerable Increase to the *Civil List*, by this *Act*, let us consider that of *Wine*. Most of the *Inns*, which are used by *Carriers*, or are far from *London*, as well as much the greatest Number of *publick Houses in Market Towns* have been enabled, without dealing in *Wine*, not only to pay their Rents, but gain a tolerable Sub-fistance, and support the Burthen of *Quarering Soldiers*, by selling of *Brandy*, *Punch*, and *Ale*; nor can it be expected that the Profits of *Ale* alone will be sufficient to answer three such Demands. Numbers of them therefore must turn to selling of *Wine*; and whatever Share of that Composition shall be *real Wine*, there will be a proportional Share of the Duty paid to the *Civil List*; which will not only occasion more Money

to go out of the Nation, but will raise the Price Abroad upon what We already consume, by making the Demand for it so much the greater there. Besides This, there is a very great Duty to be paid for a *Wine Licence*, the Profits of which belong all to the *Civil List*.

Had the *Law*, which was made in the second Year of his Majesty's Reign, been effectual, no Benefits would have accrû'd to the *Civil List Revenues*, in particular, but such as would have been equal to Those of the *Publick*; for it cannot be conceived that the *same Persons*, still managing the *Civil List and publick Revenues*, were less careful of *one of them*, at that Time, than They are at present.

It is well known that, at that Time, the *publick Creditors* wanted no such Clause for their Share in the *Duties*; since the whole of *those Funds* then, as well as now, produced above double what they did, when they were originally granted, besides the Saving there had been, by much the greatest Part being subscribed into the *South Sea Company*, and since reduced to 4 *per Cent.* All the Experience They then had, with Regard to the *Civil List*, consisted only in the great Decrease and Loss on *Beer and Ale*, from 1725 to 1729, and the Increase in Proportion upon the *Spirits*. They had not seen, nor wanted any Proof, how much the Decrease of the *one* would be the Increase of the *other*; yet even then so sensible were *They* and the *Parliament* that there could be no possible Loss to *either*, that it was enacted, “ * that all the Monies arising by

* Geo. 2. p. 337.

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" the said Duties, &c. shall from Time to Time
 " be paid into the Receipt of his Majesty's Ex-
 " chequer in *England* distinctly and apart from
 " all other Branches of the publick Revenues,
 " subject and liable to the future Disposition of
 " Parliament" — So careful were some Persons,
 at that Time, to prevent its going to the *Sinking Fund*, which belongs to those publick Creditors, that by those last Words it was expressly excepted, that it might be a Fund for their future *Disposition*; so unnecessary was any Provision of the Nature of the present *Act* thought, at that Time; nor do the publick Creditors need it now, but for the Sake of being coupled with the *Civil List*, which it may be thought carries a better Appearance.

Another Thing, which ought to be consider'd, is; whether We are so rich, and in such flourishing Circumstances, as to afford an *Increase to the Civil List*. Whoever sees the Poverty, Distress, and Want of Money, in almost all Parts of the Country, and how much it hath been increased of late Years, with the terrible, though just, Apprehensions of its being still greater, may be apt to think that We are not able — If to This We add the great Decrease of the publick Revenues since the Time of that *Grant*, and the Loss, which it is said will happen to them by this *Act*; it is highly unreasonable to be still giving more to the *Civil List*, because the People are now less able, though not less willing, to pay even the 800,000*l.* a Year; a Revenue so great, that there is Reason to believe, without an additional 100,000*l.* that if even all the Sums were paid out of it, as were design'd by the original *Grant*, it would of itself be sufficient to answer all good Purposes; for it is worth observing

serving that his late Majesty, upon the Medium of his whole Reign, had but 700,000*l.* a Year; and yet the Privy Purse, secret Service Money, Pensions, Bounties, and Money without Account, from Lady-Day 1721, to Lady-Day 1725, amounted to 2,728,759*l.* which, for four Years, is 682,189*l.* per Annum.

We have been desired to think that the great Decrease of the Revenues, which hath happen'd of late Years, was owing to the *Bounties paid on Corn exported*; but That, when enquired into for the last Year, will not be found to exceed the common Run of Years formerly; though it is much to be fear'd that the French will soon drive Us out of that Trade, as well as the Sugar; and when they and the Woollen one are gone, how much longer shall We be able —

Upon the whole, either this Evil was not so great as to require such a desperate Remedy; or the Remedy ought not to be purchased; for it cannot be imagined that his Majesty would have refused his Consent to a Bill, for preserving the Lives of his Subjects, without their giving an Increase to the Civil List; which might create a greater Evil, by lessening the Affections and Duty of the People; at the same Time that there was so far from being any Possibility of a Loss, that there was all reasonable Probability of a great Increase, without it. It therefore seem'd highly unnecessary, considering the Circumstances of the Nation, to give an additional 70,000*l.* a Year; which, if it were to be valued after the Manner of the famous Representation, at 25 Years Purchase, amounts to 1,750,000*l.*

As Experience shews Us that We seldom or never get rid of *these sort of Burthens*, when once imposed upon Us, I hope I shall not in any wise suffer in your Opinion, or That of my Countrymen, for endeavouring to prevent its being laid upon Us.

I am, Sir, &c.

F I N I S.





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